

## Chad

Political violence continues to destabilize Chad and the human rights climate remains poor. More than 400,000 civilians live in refugee and displaced persons camps along Chad's eastern border with Sudan, at risk of rights abuses, including child recruitment and gender-based violence. Many conflict-affected civilians are situated in rural and remote parts of eastern Chad that insecurity puts off limits to humanitarian actors, including some areas under the control of Chadian rebel groups.

The past year saw a dramatic escalation in the three-year-old proxy conflict between Chad and Sudan. A February coup attempt by Chadian rebels backed by Sudan nearly toppled the government of Chadian President Idriss Deby Itno, and a raid in May by Sudanese rebels backed by Chad brought fighting to the streets of a suburb of Khartoum. Efforts by the African Union to mend relations between N'Djamena and Khartoum have proved fruitless.

### February 2008 Coup Attempt

Chadian rebels backed by Sudan invaded Chad from bases in Darfur in January. By February 2, rebels and government forces were fighting gun battles in N'Djamena, Chad's capital. Government tanks and helicopters caused serious destruction to civilian installations, including the central market. More than 400 civilians were killed and over 1,000 wounded before the rebels retreated back to Darfur the next day. Spillover from the fighting left Chadian rebels in northern Cameroon, along with 30,000 Chadian refugees.

In the immediate aftermath of the attempted *coup d'état*, three prominent opposition leaders were arrested. Two were subsequently released, but Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh, the spokesman for a coalition of opposition parties, "disappeared." Suspected rebel sympathizers were subject to arbitrary arrest by security forces, as were members of ethnic groups associated with rebel movements. While in detention, many civilians were tortured and most were denied due process.

In March the government convened a Commission of Inquiry to investigate crimes committed in the wake of the February coup attempt. The Commission issued a report in September that implicated President Deby's Presidential Guard in the disappearance of Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh and found that members of the Chadian security forces were responsible for crimes including arbitrary arrests, unlawful killings, torture, and rape. Chadian government helicopters were charged with indiscriminate attacks against civilians. The Commission's report represents an important step toward accountability, but did not identify specific perpetrators of abuses. A follow-up body established by the government to continue the work of the Commission is composed of 10 ministers and the prime minister—a lack of independence that suggests limited political willingness to push investigations forward.

### **EU-UN Civilian Protection Force**

In September 2007 the UN Security Council approved a European Union-United Nations hybrid operation for the protection of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in eastern Chad. Deployment of the UN humanitarian component, the United Nations Mission in Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), was subject to extensive delays, and its protection activities in refugee camps and displacement sites were negligible in 2008.

Deployment of the military component, the European Union Force (EUFOR Tchad/RCA), began in February 2008, and EUFOR's 3,300 troops have been successful in fostering a sense of security in some areas of eastern Chad, particularly in large towns, refugee camps, and IDP sites. However, IDPs and other conflict-affected civilians outside large towns received little protection from EUFOR, and attacks against humanitarian actors in eastern Chad increased despite EUFOR's presence in the field.

In December the UN Security Council is expected to expand the operation by adding up to 3,000 personnel and substituting European Union soldiers with UN peacekeeping troops.

## **Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons**

Eastern Chad is host to over 220,000 refugees from Darfur and more than 180,000 IDPs. Most of the population is concentrated in official camps in the Chad-Sudan border zone, but thousands of IDPs live in remote “unofficial” sites.

Despite ongoing violence and insecurity, aid agencies reduced IDP food rations. Coupled with rising commodity prices, this put pressure on IDPs to return to their villages to cultivate. Camps for IDPs and refugees have become militarized. There is a high incidence of gender-based abuses in camps, including domestic violence, rape, early marriage, forced marriage, and child trafficking. Tasks, such as collecting firewood, expose women and girls to sexual violence. Threats and attacks against humanitarian aid workers have prompted many organizations to pull out of the region, leaving many civilians without access to aid.

## **The Use and Recruitment of Child Soldiers**

The use and recruitment of child soldiers by government forces and allied paramilitary groups is ongoing. The recruitment of children into the Chadian National Army (ANT) is routine in internally displaced persons sites in the Goz Beida area of eastern Chad. Children in Sudanese refugee camps in eastern Chad are also subject to recruitment, primarily by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), a Sudanese rebel group that receives backing from the Chadian government.

The government reached a formal agreement with the United Nations Children’s Fund to demobilize all children from the ANT in May 2007, but more than 93 percent of the 512 children released from the government army to date were former members of rebel factions that joined the ANT under the auspices of peace accords.

Demobilization of child soldiers from the ANT itself has been negligible. In August 2008 the UN Security Council working group on children in armed conflict confirmed the continued use and recruitment of child soldiers by all parties. The working group noted that its recommendations issued in a September 2007 report had not been acted upon by the government.

## **World Bank Pipeline Project**

In 1998 the World Bank loaned \$1.2 billion for a pipeline between oil fields in southern Chad and an offloading terminal in Cameroon, kick-starting Chad's petroleum industry. The World Bank's controversial Revenue Management Program obligated the government to devote the bulk of its oil revenues to priority sectors, such as health and education. In September, amid charges that government officials were unwilling to meet these terms, the Revenue Management Program was terminated. Citing the government's non-compliance with the loan terms, the World Bank secured the early repayment of the outstanding balance, ending the Bank's involvement in the pipeline project and freeing the government of its obligation to earmark revenues to poverty reduction. Government revenue over the lifetime of the World Bank project totaled at least \$2.5 billion.

## **Hissène Habré Trial**

Senegal's parliament passed a constitutional amendment in July removing the final legal obstacle to judicial proceedings against former Chadian president Hissène Habré, who stands accused of crimes against humanity and torture during his 1982-1990 rule. The new legislation amended a 2007 law that permitted the prosecution of cases of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and torture, including crimes committed outside of Senegal. The new law encompasses crimes committed prior to the enactment of the 2007 law.

Prosecutors are conducting interviews with victims and former officials of the Habré regime and are examining fourteen complaints filed in September, alongside documentary evidence from the files of the Bureau of Documentation and Security, Chad's former political police. Based on a review of the evidence, the prosecution will decide whether to file formal charges.

In August prosecutors in Chad accused Habré of providing support to rebel groups involved in the failed assault on N'Djamena in February, and sentenced him to death in absentia. Senegal's Justice Minister expressed concerns that the decision would interfere with Senegal's proceedings against Habré, but Chadian authorities insisted that the ruling pertained only to the events of February 2008.

## **Key International Actors**

France has more than 1,000 troops permanently stationed in Chad and has provided military intelligence, logistical assistance, medical services, and ammunition to the Chadian military. During the attempted *coup d'état* in February, French military advisors provided intelligence to their Chadian counterparts, and France arranged for the delivery of tank ammunition to the beleaguered government forces on the night of February 2. In the aftermath of the February events, pressure from France was instrumental in compelling the government to establish the Commission of Inquiry to investigate possible war crimes. France, with other international actors, will be pivotal in ensuring the follow-up commission is more appropriately composed than at the time of writing, and works rigorously and effectively.

The United States continues to train Chadian commandos in counterterrorism under the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Initiative. However, in 2008 security assistance to Chad came under scrutiny in the US Congress—in September Senator Richard J. Durbin wrote to US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice questioning the provision of military assistance despite Chad's poor human rights record. The US Child Soldiers Accountability Act, which was signed into law in October, provides for the prosecution of any individual on US soil for the use and recruitment of child soldiers, even if the children were recruited or served as soldiers outside the US. Given the widespread use of child soldiers in Chadian government forces, the new US law could potentially be applied to Chadian government officials.

Chad is due to be reviewed under the Universal Periodic Review mechanism of the UN Human Rights Council in May 2009.